



## **United States Interagency Council on Homelessness**

*Preventing and Ending Homelessness in the United States*

### **Census lays plans to ensure homeless are counted**

*2010 Census – Leaving No One Behind*

The 2010 Census will be a count of everyone living in the United States, including people experiencing homelessness. Mandated by the U.S. Constitution, Census data are used to apportion Congressional seats to states, to distribute more than \$400 billion in federal funds to local, state and tribal governments each year and to make decisions about what community services to provide. The 2010 Census questionnaire will be one of the shortest in history, with only 10 questions. Strict laws protect the confidentiality of respondents and the information they provide.

Counting people experiencing homelessness presents one of the more significant challenges faced by the Census Bureau. Plans are in place to ensure that this segment of the American populace is reached. Some members of the population experiencing homelessness will be counted through the regular mail-back questionnaires, if they are temporarily living with someone who lists them on the form. However, to assure that people experiencing homelessness are included in the 2010 Census, the Census Bureau has developed a special Service-Based Enumeration (SBE) operation specifically designed to count people who might be missed during the traditional count of housing units and group quarters. These service locations and pre-identified outdoor locations include: emergency and transitional shelters with sleeping facilities, shelters for children who are runaways, neglected or experiencing homelessness, soup kitchens, regularly scheduled mobile food vans, and pre-identified targeted non-sheltered outdoor locations. These targeted outdoor locations are places where people live without paying to stay.

The special SBE program will be conducted over three days at the end of March 2010, at various facilities identified by the Census Bureau with the help of advocacy organizations, and local, state and national partners.

- On Monday, March 29, 2010, census workers will conduct a count at emergency and transitional shelters with sleeping facilities;
- On Tuesday, March 30, 2010, census workers will conduct a count at soup kitchens and regularly scheduled mobile food vans; and
- On Wednesday, March 31, 2010, census workers will conduct a count at pre-identified outdoor locations such as encampments underneath highway overpasses or bridges and other areas where members of the homeless population are known to live.

Although specific dates have been designated for collecting counts at these different types of facilities, service providers will be given the flexibility to have the count at their facility conducted on any one of the three days scheduled.

While the SBE operation is crucial to the accuracy of the 2010 Census, it is important to understand that the results from the SBE operation do not provide a count of the population experiencing homelessness, nor do the results provide a count of the population who use those services at the location where they are counted. People enumerated at these locations will be included in the areas' population counts. For the 2010 Census, only emergency and transitional shelter population counts will be published separately. All other SBE population data will be included in the 'other non-institutional group quarters' category. For a discussion of the Census 2000 data on the emergency and transitional shelter population, you may obtain a copy of that report at [www.census.gov/prod/2001pubs/censr01-2.pdf](http://www.census.gov/prod/2001pubs/censr01-2.pdf).

### **Effective Local Approaches**

The Census Bureau has actively engaged partners nationwide to assist with its enumeration efforts. Local census offices are able to determine what the best approach to the SBE operation is for their area. This allows for flexibility since the local staff, local government, and advocacy organizations on the ground are in the best position to ensure effective cooperation.

Local census offices can make use of cultural facilitators to guide them to and through communities for people experiencing homelessness.

In the main Los Angeles regional census office, employees worked closely with four advocacy organizations to create a video on: how to effectively approach the population experiencing homelessness; sensitivities census workers should be aware of; and how to conduct successful

enumeration. The Census Bureau has taken that original video and mass produced it for training purposes prior to the March enumeration.

### **History of Homeless Enumeration**

In 1990, the Census Bureau had an operation called Shelter and Street Night. It was an operation where census workers enumerated at shelters and street locations. The lessons learned from this effort allowed for revised procedures in 2000 that included other service locations, soup kitchens, and regularly scheduled food vans. The major enhancement for the 2010 Census provides flexibility regarding the day census workers conduct the enumeration. In contrast, there was a set date for the enumeration for each type of location in 2000 and some locations had difficulty with enumeration as a result. Cooperation between service providers and census workers is key to getting the best count of those experiencing homelessness during the 2010 Census. Service providers' knowledge informs an effective enumeration at the local level.

### **Get Involved with 2010 Census/Contact Information for Questions**

If you are a provider of services to persons experiencing homelessness in your community, your organization may already be actively involved in planning for the 2010 Census. If you are not yet involved we encourage you to contact your regional census office. The link below will take you to a list of Census Bureau Regional Offices; select the regional census center that covers your state.

[www.census.gov/aboutus/regions.html](http://www.census.gov/aboutus/regions.html)